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Bible Study and Devotion

Or, How to Study the Bible
for Personal Spiritual Growth

COMPILED BY

H. A. THOMPSON, D.D., LL.D.

Editor *The United Brethren Review*

"I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word." Psalm 119: 16.



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To My Wife

“TELL me, in a word, how to study my Bible,’ a busy man once said, as he waited for his train. On your knees, in earnest prayer to God for light, and in deep meditation upon what is written. God must enlighten, and you must think. Never open your Bible for even a few moments’ study of its contents without at least lifting your heart to God in real prayer that he may open to you the Scriptures. Herein we find at least part of the explanation of the fact that many unlettered men and women have a knowledge of the real contents of the Word of God that puts to shame men of profound scholarship. They are taught of God. They asked wisdom; they asked it of God, and they obtained it.” (James 1:5-7.)—*Rev. R. A. Torrey.*

“READER, weigh what has been said. Endeavor to ponder the Scriptures as well as to read them; and remember especially and emphatically, first and before all things else, that, as they can only be profitably understood by that Spirit which inspired them, all reading, however attentive, however thoughtful, which is not preceded by earnest prayer for the teaching and illumination of the Holy Spirit may be interesting to the mind; may be useful as all information is useful; *but will most undoubtedly* be profitless to the heart.”—*Dr. E. M. Goulburn.*

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"The word of the Lord is tried."—*Psalms* 18:30.

"I will delight myself in thy commandments."—*Psalms* 119:47.

"Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage."—*Psalms* 119:54.

"Seek ye out the book of the Lord, and read."—*Isaiah* 34:16.

"Hear the word of the Lord."—*Jeremiah* 22:29.

"Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures."—*Matthew* 22:29.

"What advantage hath the Jew? . . . First of all that they were intrusted with the oracles of God."—*Romans* 3:1, 2.

"Handling aright the word of truth."—*II. Timothy* 2:15.

"And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."—*Ephesians* 6:17.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom."—*Colossians* 3:16.

"The word of the Lord abideth forever."—*I. Peter* 1:25.

BIBLE STUDY AND DEVOTION

I

The Bible a Revelation from God

THE Bible is a unique book. It is made up of a number of books, written by different persons, and extending over hundreds of years. It claims to be the real word of God; his message to a lost world. The message it teaches was attested in the days of the apostles by wonderful signs and remarkable deeds.

In some respects we who live to-day have a very great advantage over those early Christians. They had no facilities for printing or multiplying books that the common people could have the Word of God in their own hands. They received it from the lips of inspired men, who were sent out to preach it, and did so, with infallible correctness.

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We have no inspired men to-day, but we have an inspired Book, which keeps back nothing that we should know. We must receive it as confirming a revelation of God which he makes to us, as well as a revelation to us of ourselves. The Scriptures evidently so teach. (II. Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:1, 2; II. Peter 1:20, 21.) The Book has in it a human element, for it was written by human beings, and in a human language. It speaks to the human reason and intelligence. It appeals to human motives. It did not originate with the men who wrote the books; it is not simply a combination of the writings of these men, but it is the word of God brought to us through the instrumentality of inspired men who wrote as they were commanded by the Holy Spirit.

If this Book, or these sixty-six books, are of God, as we have assumed, then the teachings must come to us with authority. When God speaks, all other voices must be silent. It is our business

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to hear and to obey. The books of our fellows give us their opinions, their best judgments on certain questions, but when God speaks it is the final word; nothing else can take its place. What he asserts is true, and must be received. No matter how unpalatable the truth may be, what he commands to be done, if refused, endangers our salvation. In proportion as we obey shall clearer vision be given us. "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself" (John 7:17).

The word of God as revealed in the Scriptures has very much to do with the salvation of man. The Holy Spirit uses it in the work of regeneration. "Of his own will he brought us forth with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (James 1:18). By the same means our faith is increased. "So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). "He that

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heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life" (John 5:24). By it our justification and sanctification are secured. "There is no stage in our career, there are no circumstances or conditions or relations possible to us but some word of God is exactly adapted thereto, and the chief aim of Bible study is to lead us into a large and accurate acquaintance with the Scriptures, that we shall know how to use them for our guidance and growth."

“THE spiritual life within us stands just as much in need of nourishment, of assistance, as do the physical life and the intellectual life. We may not say that the religious or spiritual will take care of itself. . . . Of all the agencies which may serve as sources of help in the training and strengthening of the religious life, the Bible, when studied, is the most helpful, and, in a word, indispensable.”—*William Rainey Harper.*

II

Need of Bible Study

IF God has made a revelation to us in human speech, then he wishes us to use all the means in our power to find out exactly what he says. He cannot communicate to us the richest revelations of himself without an effort on our part. The pupil must have a willing mind if he will receive the teaching and profit by the teacher's method. God has so done in the arrangement of the material world. He has stored away the coal and the ores of various kinds in the bowels of the earth, and if we would use them for the comfort of our families, or for the transaction of commerce, we can succeed only by human understanding and skill. Timber is scattered over the face of the earth, provided beforehand for man's comfort and profit, but the ships of commerce

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are not found ready-built for our use. We must cut and saw and fashion the timber before we can have the sturdy ship or the handsome Pullman.

So, in a sense, we are to look upon the Scriptures as a vast tract of rich country in which are splendid forests and rich mines awaiting the skill of the lumberman and the pick of the miner; wells of luscious water waiting for the digger; the best of land awaiting the skill and labor of the farmer. The territory is rich in resources of every kind to meet every spiritual want of every man, no matter how numerous or how strong these wants may be, but they await the hand of human activity to fit them for their intended use.

To be more specific, we might say, The Bible is a book of principles, and not of rules. A rule points out a definite and specific task, concerning which there can be no mistake. A principle makes a requirement, reveals a tone of mind which will develop differently under different circumstances.

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The regulations of the Jewish dispensation were mostly rules, which were to be observed in a particular way. Now, for the most part, we find only broad principles. From these principles we must deduce our own rules; but to do so requires extensive information and careful thinking.

The Bible is a book of examples, rather than of precepts. In the New Testament there is much more of narrative than of precept. It would be a relief to some people if the Scriptures should say definitely and minutely whether it is right to dance, to play cards, to ride on Sunday trains, to insure one's life, and a thousand other things that men want to know, but to include all the possible questions that might arise in coming ages and in all lands would require a Bible a thousand times as large as the one we now have. In these narratives the truth is concealed, and we are expected to find it out for ourselves, and to do this will require mental effort. This effort

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brings its own reward, for the truth comes to us with more of life and freshness than when presented in deliberate statement.

Again, the teachings of the Bible are not systematically arranged. There is no effort made by the writers to classify doctrines, to systematize precepts, or to arrange duties in regular logical or chronological order. The writer makes his statement of truth or fact as he sees it, and if any modification or limitation is to be made, he does not stop to make it, but it is found in some other portion of the volume. The same thing is seen in nature. If the student wishes to form a science of nature, he gathers up the facts and teachings and does his own classifying. "He thinks God Almighty's thoughts after him." So the theologian will not find his science prepared for him, but must gather here and there out of God's Word the truths concerning God and man, and do his own classifying.

All of this clearly shows that if we

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would draw from the Scriptures the lessons meant to be taught, there is need of careful thought and meditation. Merely reading the Bible is not Bible study. No method has yet been discovered by means of which the truths of the Bible can be made our own, and be interwoven into our very natures, save by faithful, careful, and persistent study. We can look upon nature and enjoy, after a fashion, the pictures she paints, without very much effort; our enjoyment, however, will not be as intelligent, nor as permanent as if we had studied her moods and manifestations. If we would profit by her endless stores of material, we must fell the timber, open up mines, build the shops, and fashion the furnaces. So if we would profit by the endless stores which the pen of inspiration has given us, we must, by prayer and thought and meditation, tunnel into these great storehouses of information and find the truth adapted to our wants. From the examples given us we

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must find the practical teaching; from the rule we must gather the principle involved. When the principle is given, we must find the rule that grows out of it. As men are constituted, they need rules that are definite and distinct, in order to make progress in the spiritual life.

From another and a different standpoint, there is great need in this our day for a faithful study of the Bible for our own personal religious growth. This is true, not only concerning our own Zion, but indeed the whole religious world. Herbert E. Baright, M. D., in the *Empire State Notes*, emphasizes this need in the following paragraphs:

“The young people of to-day, the men and women of to-morrow, on whom we must depend for the purity and stability of home, and church, and state, are growing up in an atmosphere of materialism, skepticism, and unexampled hostility to the Word of God.

“The family altar, the earliest conservator of the religious life, is falling

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into disuse. Between the morning newspaper and the exactions of school and business, it seems impracticable, in the present day, for the family to get together for morning devotions. The young people of the present day are not receiving the tuition in the school of prayer, with its unconscious shaping and molding of character, which our forefathers had.

“There is a waning of personal religion. In the promotion of numerous reforms and philanthropic enterprises, and in our enthusiasm over important social problems, there is a tendency to forget that these things cannot bring us into right relations with God. Peace must still be made at Calvary. Morality and good works, and even the regular observance of the forms of public worship, count for but little unless the heart and life are definitely yielded to the rulership of God.

“Christ said, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor,’ but he first said, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.’ In the present

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day there is a tendency, we believe, to exalt the second commandment above the first; there is a tendency to emphasize *ré form*, to the neglect of *pré form*; a tendency to put service before fellowship; works before faith.

“Good books and religious newspapers and the moral essays of the popular press are largely taking the place, in our devotional reading, of the Scripture itself. In current literature there are fewer allusions to the Bible and, even among our best writers, there are fewer quotations from the Bible than formerly. This condition of affairs is due, we believe, to the decadence of school and family worship.

“Among Christian believers, there is a lack of that direct and personal relationship with God which Christ and the disciples had, and on which they depended; there is a lack of a realizing sense of God as our Father, ever present and ever active in the every-day affairs of his children. If we would know God and truly love and serve

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him; if we would enjoy that fellowship with him which our hearts crave; if we would be Spirit-filled and Spirit-led, we must meet him face to face, alone; we must talk with him, and we must listen to him as he talks to us; we must let him speak to the very depths of our lives."

“I WOULD like to see a huge pile of all the books, good and bad, that were ever written, prayer-books and sermons and hymn-books and all that, smoking like Sodom of old, if the reading of these books keeps you away from the reading of the Bible; for a ton weight of human literature is not worth an ounce of Scripture; one single drop of the essential tincture of the Word of God is better than a sea full of our commentings and sermonizings and the like.”—*Spurgeon*.

III

Purposes and Aims of Bible Study

It is said that one usually gets out of a book that which he brings to it; in other words, he will likely get the particular kind of information for which he is seeking. One may read history to find the career of a particular man, or class of men; to find the drift of certain national tendencies; to find the causes that led up to certain results, and show how the effects naturally followed; to trace God's movements in the affairs of nations, as well as in those of individuals; to learn lessons from the past, that may guide in the activities of the present, and for various other reasons. So, while the Bible was given us for one supreme purpose, and should, therefore, be studied with this end in

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view, there are minor reasons for its study which would justify us in giving it our most careful attention.

The Historical Method

The Bible is composed of sixty-six books, the work of some thirty-six authors, and covering probably sixteen centuries of the world's history. Through all these books there prevails one prominent idea. The Old Testament is the product of one country, extending, however, over a long period of time. The New Testament is concerned with several countries, but covering a shorter period of time. These books show a great variety of contents, such as history, theology, philosophy, poetry, biography, aspiration, prediction. These writers were prophets, priests, kings, apostles or evangelists. The books were written amid a variety of circumstances. These unique books are accepted by many as the inspired word of God. Herein they find comfort

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when they are sad, guidance when they are perplexed, and instruction which they can find nowhere else.

Now and then some ask themselves, Is this Bible really true? Where did it come from? Is our Bible the same the ancient Christians read? Is the Old Testament which we have the same which our Lord had in his day, and from which he quoted? Do we have the same New Testament which the apostles and their followers had before the first century closed? All this is an interesting study, and would take us back in the world's history to the discovery of the different manuscripts written a long time since, and most carefully preserved. A comparison of these by the best scholars is the basis of the accepted text of to-day. We may follow on down, examining the different versions that have been made, until we reach the latest of our own day.

The Literary Method

Another method of study we might term the literary method. This would deal with questions of composition, authority, date, style, contents, and such like things. A portion of these books are poetical, and the nature of Hebrew poetry needs to be understood in order to understand them. Others are narrative and historical, others argumentative, and others prophetic. The character of the men who wrote, the age in which they lived, and the circumstances surrounding them, would enter into the nature of their writings. While we claim that the Holy Spirit inspired these men to write, yet the individuality of each shows itself in his writings. Paul does not write like Luke, nor Isaiah like Job. The Spirit is not confined to any one method, but may use different mental equipments to do his work. "Men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (II. Peter 1:21). The author of the Hebrews implies this. "God having in old

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time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son" (Hebrews 1:1).

Not only do the writers differ as to their information, their literary skill, their use of words, their power of analysis, and their power to picture, but the books also differ as to their contents. Probably nearly every one of them was written to meet some particular emergency. One to warn of coming danger, and how to meet it; another to help them to bear up in the midst of trials; one to Hebrew readers, and another to Gentiles; one to mark the progress of the little church in spreading the gospel; another to build up and establish us in the truth of God. To study any or all of these is a most delightful study, and worthy of the loftiest intellect. "Genesis is a book of origins, or beginnings, and the whole book illustrates this idea. Exodus seems to have for its key-note, redemp-

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tion; the need, the method, and the results of redemption form the substance of the book. In Leviticus the main idea is, perhaps, worship; test this in reading, and correct if necessary. We may take Joshua and consider whether conquest is not the thread running through it; or Judges, and note the dismal failure from first to last. In Job, the main thought seems to be the providence of God; and in the Psalms, communion with God. The burden of Isaiah seems to be faith, leading to faithfulness, and this is pointed out by the history of his relations to Kings Ahaz and Hezekiah."

Inductive Study

In speaking of this method Dr. Balentine says: "The purpose of inductive study of the Bible is that the student may have first-hand knowledge of the Scriptures. It is not to learn what the teacher says about the Bible, but by the use of his own eyes to become personally familiar with it. Such

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study must have three qualities; namely, largeness, rapidity, and inductiveness.

“1. Largeness. By this is meant that the books shall be studied by wholes, not as mere strings of unrelated texts. The meaning of individual verses must be ascertained from the connections in the great lines of thought. The most attention shall be paid to the general subject, the principal chain of thought, and the chief proposition of each book.

“2. Rapidity. By this is meant that a method shall be used which in a few years will lead a student through the whole Bible, and give him a general familiarity with the contents and mutual relation of all the books. No method of study which deals microscopically with detached portions can ever give a correct general knowledge of the Bible or make known its most interesting and important truths. As beginners in geography need outline maps of the continents, so beginners in

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Bible study need to go quickly over all its main features.

“3. Inductiveness. By this is meant that the student shall find the answers to his questions for himself by his own reading. It means also, and this is most important, that the student shall, in the use of the inductive method, not read to see what the Bible says about faith or prayer, or any particular subject, but simply to see *what* it says. This is very hard for many people to understand. We must not ask leading questions in inductive study, that is, questions which indicate what sort of answers we expect; but we must ask purely general questions, and be prepared for answers that are surprising and wholly aside from our own familiar thoughts and inquiries. In inductive study, we must avoid branching off into things that are merely suggested, or related, or into inferences and combinations with the teachings of other books. What we are to learn is, what the particular author was most

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occupied with in writing that particular book."

The Exegetical Method

Another method of Bible study might be termed the exegetical. By this we seek to find the true interpretation of the contents of the Bible; the exact meaning of its various passages, sections, verses, and even words. To do this well, one needs to have a good knowledge of language and the rules of grammar, to be well informed as to the manner and customs of the people of that particular period for whom or among whom these various books were written. To this we might add a good knowledge of the meaning and use of words. Herein a knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek languages is of very great value to the minister, for it enables him to go back to the original Scriptures. The ordinary student must confine himself to the English translation, but he can make this very helpful, if he will. To do this, he wants

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the best translation possible. The one who says the old version is good enough for him, makes a great mistake, and shows a bad spirit. If God has spoken to us through the medium of written language, we should do our best to find out exactly what he says. If we have a version which gives us a clearer and better translation of any part of Scripture than we had before, so far, at least, as that part is concerned, an honest man is placed under obligation to use the better version. If he will not, he thereby dishonors the one who sends the message, and shows his own obstinacy and obtuseness. If he can have but one version, it should be the best; if possible, better have a number. The different versions appearing which seek to express the Divine word in our modern English idioms are all valuable, so far as we have seen them. It may not be best at this juncture to use them in the pulpit, but they should have a place in the private study. This method of study is a very important one, and is

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fundamental to our knowledge of the truth; yet one may become so interested in the details of this method that he will fail to get the greatest personal blessing from Bible study.

The Doctrinal Method

Another method of study may be termed the doctrinal. This is the special work of the theologian, but need not be confined to him. It is an interesting study to find out at different stages of the world's history the revelation God has made of himself to man. Having learned the meaning of certain sections, verses, and paragraphs, we may group them together under various heads, so far as they are different from each other, and find, as we may, a bond of union running through them. In this way we may build up a system of doctrinal teachings. These are not already grouped, as we find them in the books of the Bible. The teachings concerning God and his revelation through Christ are found scattered from Gen-

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esis to Revelation. If all men interpreted them alike, we should find but one system of theology; because they do not, we have more than one. In the things essential to salvation they substantially agree. Others take the reverse order and, having accepted certain theories of belief, search the Scriptures to find proof-texts which will substantiate their theories, irrespective of the many texts which would seem to contradict them. By means of isolated statements, taken out of their places, almost anything could be proven. "The devil can quote Scripture for his purpose."

The Devotional Method

This is the study for personal religious growth. It is an effort to find out the mind of God, the truth he has revealed, so that we may more and more fashion our lives in accordance with that will. The methods already given are all proper, but in themselves do not necessarily lead to the highest results.

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Bible study is, first of all, intended to keep the soul in close contact with God. A man may make himself conversant with the early manuscripts of the Bible, and be able to tell when and where written, and how preserved; he may be more or less familiar with their general arrangement, the style in which written, and the characteristics of the authors; he may have constructed for himself an outline of the teachings of the Bible upon important subjects; and yet, save the intellectual pleasure which would come from the careful consideration of any writings, there has come to him comparatively little of spiritual profit. Men may lecture about the Bible, may even preach on its topics, and yet not be helped much by all their study. They have never asked, "What saith my Lord unto his servant?" or, "What wilt thou have *me* to do?" They have never looked into this Book as a personal message to their own souls. Some of them may be included in the class of whom our Lord

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spoke, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out devils, and by thy name do many mighty works?"

To make this devotional study profitable to us, we must have fellowship with God. The best results cannot be reached, as in other methods, by mere intellectual study. Unless our sins are forgiven and we are accepted of God, we shall not be profited. A man whose heart is not right with God, who is not seeking to find out and to do his will, cannot study devotionally. Here, especially, spiritual things are spiritually discerned. "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given

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to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged."

If we would get the most profit out of this study, our hearts must be kept right with God. Our lives must not be up and down, here to-day and away to-morrow, but must be true to God. We must be anxious to find out exactly what God teaches and be willing to do what he requires. The secret of the Lord is revealed "to them that fear him." In Old-Testament times there were periods when there was no "open vision," for men had disobeyed God. So there are times when the believer does not see clearly and does not learn rapidly, for he has not kept himself in touch with God. This devotional study will give us increased spiritual power

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and blessing, and this in turn will give us still greater insight into divine truth.

In order to study to spiritual profit we must "*search* the Scriptures." The man who gets the most valuable treasures out of the sciences must dig for them. The richest are not usually picked up by the wayside. A listless and indifferent reading of the Scriptures will not let us into their hidden meaning. We must bring to bear on the passage our best judgment, our logical skill, our most vivid imagination, all the mental power we possess. The words, the sentences, the nature of the whole paragraph must be considered. All this Scripture has been given for a purpose, and its words and illustrations and Oriental references have not been selected at random. We must get the meaning, find the message conveyed, and make it a part of our being.

The word "meditate" comes from the Greek, and means "to attend." It is reading with attention; more than

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this, it is reading with intention. Having learned the meaning of the passage, we must look carefully at each step to find its application. All scripture has a lesson for us, for it was written for our profit. The application must be made by myself, after my study of the passage, and for my own profit. The psalmist speaks (104:34) of *my* meditation of Him. David made it for himself, and so must we. His own meditation upon God's Word is a most helpful thing for every Christian.

This does not mean that the little books of devotion which have been written by the best men and women shall not be used by us. They are very valuable, and contain the best thoughts and richest experiences of earnest Christians. These are simply not to have the first place, but are to come in after we have made our own meditation. When we have first learned what God will say to us, as a result of our own personal communion with him, we may learn what he has said to oth-

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ers. While I have the same human nature as others, I may be in different circumstances, and a phase of the truth will come to me that I will not find in these books which relate the experiences of others. It must constantly be "*my* meditation" if I will get the best of it.

This must be a real meditation; the psalmist says (49:3), "of thy heart." This does not simply mean of the emotional nature, but of the whole being, the intellect, sensibilities, and will. We come to the Word of God anxious to find out exactly what it says, and intending to be guided thereby. It is not a time for listless musings or dreamy imaginings, but an earnest seeking for help, for guidance, for comfort. To make it eminently practical, one author suggests the following elements: "First, the careful reading of the particular passage or subject, thinking over its real and original meaning; next, a resolute application of it to my own life's needs, conscience,

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heart, mind, imagination, will, finding out what it has to say to me; next, a hearty turning of it into prayer for mercy and grace, that its teachings may become a part of my life; next, a sincere transfusion of it into a resolution that my life shall reproduce it; lastly, a whole-hearted surrender to, and trust in God for power to practice it forthwith, so vital, so blessed that we shall find in it our chief joy and our indispensable daily power for service."

Dr. Goulburn recommends, in substance, the following plan of meditation: First, endeavor to realize the presence of God or of Jesus Christ, as best suits your mind at the time. A single lively remembrance will be enough. He is there, and that will suffice. Second, call upon God to inspire you with holy thoughts and to bless them to your profit and growth in grace; do this with earnestness, as you would in speaking to a friend who is just quitting you. Open to the passage that forms your subject for medita-

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tion; it might be well to choose it the day before. Take the simple and avoid the difficult parts of the Bible. Third, picture to yourself the circumstances by an effort of the imagination, as, for example, you would in the case of the crucifixion. Fourth, reflect on the words of the passage; turn them over in the mind; make out what they teach, what doctrine is wrapped up in them, and what duty. Fifth, do not look upon these things with barren admiration, but turn them to account in the guidance of your own soul. So present these to your mind that they may stir the feelings of affection in your own heart, whether of hope, or fear, or gratitude, or love. These sentiments of the heart should be followed by good resolutions.

The devotional study of the Bible must thus be our daily bread. When properly done, it will enter into the very warp and woof of our spiritual life. It must be so studied as to assimilate the truths into our very being, and

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thus be able to reproduce its effects in our lives. When thus done, "The word will become all-sufficient and all-powerful in our life; the mirror to reveal (James 1); the water to cleanse (Ephesians 5); the milk to nourish (I. Peter 2); the strong meat to invigorate (Hebrews 5); the honey to delight (Psalm 119); the fire to warm, the hammer to break and fasten (Jeremiah 23); the sword to fight (Ephesians 6); the seed to grow (Matthew 13); the lamp to guide, the statute-book to legislate (Psalm 119); and the gold to treasure in time and for eternity (Psalm 119)."

"Of very great importance among the helps to secret prayer is the special study of the Bible with reference to prayer. The Bible is the only authoritative text-book on prayer. It alone acquaints us with God and Christ and the Holy Spirit. It alone shows us ourselves, others, and the world, from God's point of view. Bible study gives prayer, substance, reality, life, and power. Without devotional Bible study there can be no true communion; for we need to reiterate the thought that secret prayer is not monologue, but dialogue. Experience and testimony prove that the men who have neglected devotional Bible study have weakened in their prayer life."—*John R. Mott.*

IV

Bible Study as an Aid to the Life of Prayer

AS THE Scriptures may be said to be God talking to us, so prayer is our talking to God. It may be that we are asking for favors, temporal or spiritual; for guidance and direction along the pathway of life; for security from the dangers that beset us; it may be an expression of thanksgiving for the blessings it has been our lot to enjoy, but in either case we are talking with God. The richer our experience, the more extensive our knowledge of God and his character, the sweeter our fellowship, the more we want to talk with him, the more anxious we are to pray. We are to pray without ceasing, "earnestly," "intently," not necessarily in the utterance of any words, but with the uplift

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of the heart in devout thanksgiving or in petition.

“George Müller, one of the mightiest men of prayer of the present generation, when the hour for prayer came would begin by reading and meditating on God’s Word until out of the study of the Word a prayer began to form itself in his heart. Thus God himself was the real author of the prayer, and God answered the prayer which he himself had inspired.”

“The Word of God is the instrument which the Holy Spirit uses. It is the sword of the Spirit in more senses than one; and the one who would know the work of the Holy Spirit in any direction must feed upon the Word. The one who would pray in the Spirit must meditate much upon the Word, that the Holy Spirit may have something through which he can work. The Holy Spirit works his prayer in us through the Word, and neglect of the Word makes praying in the Holy Spirit an impossibility. If we would feed the fire

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of our prayers with the fuel of God's Word, all our difficulties in prayer would disappear."

While many portions of the Scripture are helpful in the cultivation of the religious affections, the Book of Psalms is especially so. Perhaps in the language of no other can we so well express our religious affections. Says one: "The Psalms are preëminently devotional. They exhale the very spirit of worship; they breathe the atmosphere of devotion, they magnify and praise the Lord. They ascribe to him the majesty and glory which are due to him alone. They exalt his attributes, his name, his word, his providence, and his presence in the affairs of the world. All that comes into the life of the saint, they refer to him. The difficulties, perils, temptations, enemies, sorrows, joys, in short, all the vast experiences into which God's people are brought are ascribed to him. It would seem as if the Spirit of God had gathered into these one hundred and

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fifty hymns all the sacred exercises of soul of which the redeemed have knowledge in the world. There is no state or exigency, no circumstance nor set of circumstances, of what nature soever, prosperous and adverse, bad and good, near and remote, but it may find a faithful expression in the inimitable Book. Here is mirrored all that the saint desires and seeks, and loves and hates. His hopes and fears, confidence, weaknesses, strength, triumph and failure are here. Here, too, are his temptations and trials, his conflicts with foes both without and within, his defeats and his victories. In short, the life of the believer, with its intricate mazes, its vast alterations, is here laid bare."

Says another, of this wonderful Book: "They witness to the deep Christian emotion of good men who lived three thousand years ago. Here are their experiences, their trials, their straits, their conflicts against temptation; and here also are the records of their precious faith in God, through

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which they gained the victory over the world and the wickedness thereof. Here stand recorded their excellent songs of triumph in the day of their deliverance; here the outflowing of their grateful hearts in praise to the power that redeemed and to the loving-kindness that remembered them with plenteousness of mercy and salvation. These forms of uttering devout affection are so rich, so full, and so various, that Christians in all ages have delighted to find here the very words prepared to their hand, in which their souls burdened or lightened might speak before the Lord of their wants, or of the fullness of their joy when their wants were supplied. It is not strange that Christians in all later ages should feel peculiar interest in using these words in their own worship, public or private, to express similar feelings. It will always be pleasant to think that God moved holy men of old to these utterances of earthly want, of faith in God for promised help, and of

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thanks for delivering grace. We unconsciously account their experience of God's mercy as his pledge of like mercy to his people in every age under their similar wants and in answer to the same faith and prayer for the like help in time of need."

"HE who has learned by practice, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to meditate upon the Holy Scriptures, will assuredly prefer them above every other book, however holy, however edifying. Of other books one may weary, of this, never. Others we may exhaust, but this is inexhaustible. The waters of nature are sweetest and purest at the fountain-head. So the wells of salvation which the Scripture supplies, are most fresh and invigorating when we dip our own pitchers into the fountain."—*Rev. E. M. Goulburn, D. D.*

V

Bible Study as an Aid to the Life of Meditation

ONE great duty of the hour to which the mass of people are slow to give heed is the duty of meditating upon God's Word. The psalmist says: "I will meditate on thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways" (Psalm 109: 15). "Thy servant did meditate in thy statutes" (119:23). "Mine eyes prevented the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word" (119:148). Paul, in helping to prepare Timothy for his work, says to him, "Meditate upon these things." The psalmist says of the godly man, "His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:2). "I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches" (63:6).

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This means Bible study for our own growth in the divine life. This sort of study reveals to us the weakness and shortcomings of our own lives, and how to make them better and stronger. If we would be the strong, generous, courageous Christians that we should be, and that God wants us to be, we must learn of him through his own Word. The reason why so many Christians are weak and inefficient in their relations to the unbelievers about them, is because they are not saturated with God's Word. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Nor can we be aggressive workers without this meditation upon God's Word. It would relieve us of much of the disappointment and worry and strain which are sure to come to those who do not do it. "It is impossible to have the power of the Spirit of God as a constant possession apart from the study of the Bible. To do the works of God we must have the power of God. To

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have the power of God we must have the Spirit of God. The Bible is the channel through which the Spirit comes into the life. We do not find Spirit-filled men apart from deep, devotional Bible students. If we would be filled with the Spirit, keep filled, and have our capacity constantly increase, let us become possessed with the Bible-study passion."

The usual objection made to such devotional study of the Bible is that *there is not time for it*. In the hurry and bustle of our American life it is thought we cannot take half an hour a day for such study; but let us remember that our first business is to do our Master's will. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification"; "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Must I not take time to do the will of God? Is it not his will that I should be spiritually strong and lead a devoted, useful life? Surely, he does not wish me to stand still or retrograde in the spiritual life. Have men ever

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grown strong spiritually without this devotional Bible study? On the contrary, the busiest men have taken time for this work, have honored God, and have been able to do the work required of men in their sphere in life. Because of this recognition of him, he has blessed them so they could do better work, and more of it than heretofore. Men have been challenged to test it by taking the first half-hour of the day for Bible study for one month, and then reporting if it interfered with their work or efficiency. "Hundreds of persons in different parts of the world have accepted this challenge. Thus far not one has reported that his work or standing has suffered the least; on the other hand, many of them report that such study has enabled them to do more and better work. Is it fair, therefore, for any one of us, without trying it, to say that this cannot be done?"

Dr. Samuel L. Spear lost his wife and children, and in seeking comfort and relief began such a systematic

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study of the Bible as he had never done before. He says: "I resolved that during the remainder of my life I would set apart one hour each day for the special study of the Bible, and that this should be the hour immediately preceding my breakfast, so that before taking my morning meal for the nourishment of my body I should regularly take my spiritual meal for the nourishment and comfort of my soul. What was then a purpose is now a habit. I would now no more think of omitting my Bible study in the morning than I would think of omitting my breakfast, or anything else which I must do. My only regret is that the resolution was formed at so late a period. What I have gained in the way of mental relief and spiritual comfort from the process described, I would not exchange for all the honor and wealth of this world."

The personal testimony of George Müller is very interesting and helpful: "The vigor of our spiritual life will be in exact proportion to the place held by

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the Bible in our life and thoughts. I can solemnly state this from an experience of fifty-four years. . . . In July, 1829, I began this plan of reading from the Old and New Testaments. I have read since then the Bible through one hundred times, and each time with increasing delight. When I begin it afresh it always seems like a new book. I cannot tell how great has been the blessing from consecutive, diligent, daily study. I look upon it as a lost day when I have not had a good time over the Word of God. Friends often say to me, 'Oh, I have so much to do, so many people to see, I cannot find time for Scripture study.' There are not many who have had more to do than I have had. For more than half a century I have never known a day when I had not more business than I could get through. For forty years I have had annually about thirty thousand letters, and most of them have passed through my own hands. I have nine assistants always at work, corresponding in Ger-

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man, French, English, Italian, Russian, and other languages. As pastor of a church with twelve hundred believers, great has been my care; and, besides these, the charge of five immense orphanages, a vast work; and also my publishing depot, the printing and circulating of millions of tracts and books; but I have always made it a rule never to begin work till I have had a good season with God, and then I throw myself with all my heart into this work for the day, with only a few minutes' interval for prayer."

There are some who would be willing to read religious books. This is good in itself, but will not take the place of the Bible study at first hand. It is more helpful for our own personal growth to study the Bible than to read books about the Bible. Others there are who do not care for such study, for this increased light would put new obligations upon them. There are many church-members, in some congregations the majority, who are not in

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prayer-meeting, whose voices are never heard in prayer, who if helped of God in their Bible study must get rid of their cold-heartedness, their backslidings, and renew again their loyalty to their Master. How cowardly such disciples are, and what a hindrance to the true work of the church!

When should this be done? It should be a regular thing. We want to get the habit of study, and the habit is formed by regular and frequent repetition. If possible, and we think it is, it should be once every day, surely once a week. Each day brings its own troubles and cares and worries, and we should be prepared daily for what is to come. Then it should be an hour of quiet; we should not be hurried. It takes time and effort to grow strong intellectually; it takes time to grow strong spiritually. It is not a matter of chance, but is the result of causes, as is all other growth. We should forget our business, our cares, our clocks, and everything else that would prevent

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the closest communion of the human soul with God.

“With some of you, I believe the plan of spending the first half-hour of each day alone with God is the best time in the day. The mind is less occupied. The mind is, as a rule, clearer, and the memory more retentive. But forget these reasons, if you choose. The whole case may be staked on this argument, It equips a man for the day’s fight with self and sin and Satan. He does not wait until noon until he buckles on his armor. He does not wait until he has given way to temper, or to unkind words, or to unworthy thoughts, or to easily besetting sin, and then have his Bible study. He enters the day forewarned and forearmed. John Quincy Adams, President of the United States, noted in his journal, in connection with his custom of studying the Bible each morning, ‘It seems to me the most suitable manner of beginning the day.’ Lord Cairnes, one of the busiest men in Great Britain, devoted

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the first hour and a half of every day to Bible study and secret prayer. We have all heard how Chinese Gordon, while in the Soudan, had a certain sign before his tent each morning, which meant that he must be left alone. A friend recently saw his Bible, in the Queen's apartments at Windsor, and told me that the pages of that book, which was his companion in the morning watch, were so worn that one could scarcely read the print. He always reminds me of Sir Henry Havelock, who took care to be alone each morning to ponder some portion of the Bible. When on the heaviest marches it was determined to start at some hour earlier than that which he had fixed for his devotion, he arose quite in time to hold undisturbed his communion with his God. Ruskin, in speaking to the students at Oxford, said, 'Read your Bible, making it the first morning business of your life to understand some portion of it clearly, and your daily business to obey it in all that you do

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understand.' Francke spent the first hour of each day in private devotion. Wesley, for the last forty years of his life, rose every morning at four o'clock and devoted from one to two hours to devotional Bible study and prayer. Rutherford was accustomed to rise every morning at three o'clock, and the whole of the earlier hours of the day were spent by him in prayer and meditation and study. Greater than all, we have it on the best of evidence that Christ rose a great while before it was day to hold communion with God. What he found necessary, or even desirable, can we do without? Spirituality costs. Shall we pay what it costs?"

Especially should one or more hours be taken for this work on the Christian Sabbath. The quiet of the day is conducive to study. To give us an opportunity for spiritual culture was this day given. The cessation of bodily labor and the air of sanctity thrown about the day makes it suitable for such work. Especially is this true of

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rural districts where the day is not so full of public church services as in most of our cities. If we hallowed this day by the study of God's Word, it would not to so great an extent be given up to pleasure-seeking, and certain forms of dissipation, in which, alas, we are compelled to confess many church-members indulge.

How shall this be done? It is well to have some kind of order in the work, that we may realize each day that we are making some advancement. In the "Record of Christian Work" for this year, Dr. G. Campbell Morgan has been conducting a series of "Bible Notes for Daily Devotions." A variety of "Bible Studies" have been outlined and published by the International Young Men's Christian Association. One Bible student suggests that the best order in which to study the Bible for devotional purposes would be the Gospels, Colossians, Hebrews, Psalms, Isaiah, and Deuteronomy. Another suggests the placing of Deuteronomy before

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Isaiah. Another thinks the Book of Acts should immediately follow the Gospels. It does not matter so much that there should be one specific order as that there should be *some* order. There might be an examination of the lives of Bible worthies, such as Moses, Elijah, Daniel, John the Baptist, John, Peter, Paul. "A good outline for such a study might be a man's preparation for his life-work, qualifications, difficulties encountered, achievements, the secret of his enduring influence."

Another good way would be an examination of the *great themes of religion*. These are all presented one or more times in some parts of the Bible. We are made stronger and a new inspiration is given us by associating with strong men; so our minds are enlarged, our vision widened, our aspirations increased by the study of great themes. Take any one of the great themes of the Bible and let these be faithfully studied for half an hour each day for a month, with a view to our own interest

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and profit in it, and how much we shall find ourselves lifted up beyond the little cares and perplexities of life. Make out a list for yourself and study for a specified time, the character of Christ, the divinity of Christ, the teaching of Christ, the commands of Christ, Christ as a teacher, Christ as a worker, Christ as a man of prayer, and how much more real his life will become to you!

Says one: "Mr. Moody every year at Northfield urged the importance of devoting at least one month of Bible study to each of the great doctrines, as, for example, sin, the atonement, regeneration, faith. When in college, two of us met for the study of the Bible. We wanted something to counteract the effect of skeptical philosophy. We took up the topic of the Holy Spirit, thinking we might finish it in three months. We spent a year upon it, and then felt we had only opened the door. It proved for us, however, to be the very unlocking of the Scriptures, devotion-

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ally. We might have taken the topic, prayer, or, the kingdom of God. It is not necessary to prolong the list."

By some such plan we have a distinct work for each day. While we are prosecuting this study we must be alone, in our closets or some equivalent place. We want to be alone with God so he can speak to us, and we hear him undisturbed by the din and noise above us. We must remember that we are doing this not that we may preach better sermons, or do better teaching, although if well-studied we will do both. We must not have a thought as to what and how we can use this knowledge, but that it is to help our lives, gives us better ideals of Christian living, and help us to bear the burdens that shall come to us, and give the limited time at our disposal to communion with God through his Word. The main purpose must be kept in mind, and one must not allow himself to be turned aside to try to solve some theological difficulty. We must re-

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member that no great profit will come without thorough work. Some advise us to write down some one lesson learned each day. Jeremiah says, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them"; that is, "I take these words into my mind, I store them in my memory. I revolve them over and over again. I let them touch the springs of conscience. I let them find me. I set the will at work upon them and apply them. I give them the right of way in my life; I make them a part of myself. I realize in actual experience that the words of Christ 'are Spirit and are life.' "

As to the *spirit* in which all this should be done, we may say it must be an earnest one, as though digging for hidden treasures, for in no other way can the deep things of God be learned. We must depend on the Holy Spirit, who inspired these writings and who can best interpret them. We must come with the prayerful spirit which is constantly saying, "Open thou mine

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eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." We must come with the childlike spirit, for unless we become as little children we shall not understand the mysteries of the kingdom. We must be willing at whatever cost to obey the truth as we shall see it. If we find we have left undone duties that were commanded, henceforth we must faithfully do them. If we have practiced what the Holy Spirit cannot approve, we must hereafter give it all up.

Another offers these suggestions for devotional study: 1. "Open all such occasions with a prayer for the Holy Spirit's light. (Psalm 119:18.) 2. Ask to be guided to some definite thought for yourself. 3. Dwell prayerfully on the thought thus given; is it a counsel, a precept, a warning, a promise, an experience, a command? 4. When its meaning is clear, use it as the basis of a prayer for grace to realize it in experience. 5. Yield the whole soul in full surrender to its truth and

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power. 6. Link it on the truths already known and thereby strengthen the chains of experience. 7. Trust God to reproduce it in your life that day."

"THIS Book had a great variety of penmen, and these differed from each other very widely as to gifts, natural and acquired. They range all the way from the highest poet and thinker, like Moses, David, Isaiah, Paul, down to the humblest artisan and rustic, as were Amos, Matthew, Mark, and Peter; and yet is a Book essentially of one idea. Toward Christ all its lines converge; in him all its strange voices harmonize and blend; in him all its powers and predictions have their fulfillment."
—*Dr. W. G. Moorehead.*

VI

Helpfulness of Special Books

THE books of the Bible were originally written, published, and read separately from each other. They were written for a distinct purpose, have different characteristics, and should be read as separate books. We are to grow by means of the truth, hence to cultivate the different sides of our nature we want the special truth adapted to that. Each book, or a number of books may name different subjects, and to get all that is said on one topic we would need to select from all, yet some books are more occupied with one subject than with others.

For Service

1. For example, if we want to cultivate the Christian life in relation to service, let us read Luke, the Acts, and

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James. Luke connects the work of Jesus with the world at large. He preserves those things in Jesus' life which show his interest in people outside of the Jewish nation. Jesus is the lover of humanity, the friend of the outcast, the forgiver of those who sin, and the counselor of those who sorrow. He is a man possessed of wonderful sympathy. He gives us a new conception of the kingdom of God. His book has been called, "The Gospel of the Future," because it gives us a hopeful outlook of what the future is to be. There will be a time of tribulation, but a better day will come. "Better lives will bring a better social order; better citizens will bring a better city; better men will bring a better world."

The Acts of the Apostles shows us the work that Jesus continued to do through the Holy Spirit. The work of the risen, ascended Lord is not done, but going on. It shows what Jesus set out to accomplish and how, by his method of training his apostles, he had

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put great agencies at work. The gospel had never before been cut loose from Judea, but is now entering through Gentile Christianity on a course of world-wide conquest. There is a manifestation of divine power. The Holy Spirit is the principal actor. The church is founded; it grows by persecutions. The leaders get a new conception of Christianity. The first Christian council is held. A new center of operation is established at Antioch. Paul is finally put to death, but "one mightier than all the Cæsars sat upon the throne, holding in his nail-pierced hand the scepter of universal dominion."

On the contrary, James is a conservative Hebrew, and yet, in a sense, is a liberal one. He was a very devoted man, and full of the writings of the Old Testament. He urges to the instant performance of duty, for Christ's coming is at hand. The Christian must not be surprised at trials, for these are a part of our human existence. True

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wisdom is from above, and does not come from inheritance. He gives us an exalted view of God. (1:16-18.) He discourses on the ethics of speech. He gives the Christian view of religion. (1:22-27.) Right action is very important. Faith and works must go together. Hardship and injury could be borne with, "for the presence of the Lord was at hand."

For Fellowship and Love

2. To cultivate the life of fellowship and love, read John's letters. These were written by John in his later years, toward the close of the first century. Many of the same terms are used here which are found in his Gospel. It is a time of quiet. There was a pause in the work of persecution. "The churches had undergone internal change. The destruction of Jerusalem and the shattering of Judaism had emancipated the church completely from Judaizing tendencies. The distinction between Gentile and Jew had

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completely vanished. New forces were in operation." The main source of peril now is that of heresy in the church. He shows the doctrine concerning God to be central. Religion is personal and spiritual; the fellowship with the Father includes fellowship with his children. Love to God carries with it love to all the children of God. Christ's mission is as wide as the world. The present life of the Christian is an indwelling presence, filling the soul and controlling the life. The conquering power is faith. By dwelling in Christ the will to sin is taken away. We are to walk in truth and love.

For the Life of the Spirit

3. For a better understanding of the life of the Spirit, read John 14-17. These chapters have been called the holy of holies of the Bible. Christ is about to depart from his disciples. He foresees the troubles that will come to their Master; he will be spit upon, for-

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saken, crucified, and suffer the torture of a lingering death. He will not only prepare these disciples to bear the troubles about to come upon them, but prepare his followers through all coming time for similar experiences of sorrow. He sets forth "the source of all comfort, strength, guidance, and spiritual well-being in the truth of the direct, personal presence of a seemingly absent, but really present, and seemingly slain, but really living, a seemingly defeated, but really victorious Lord and Master." These chapters contain a disclosure of the very heart of Christianity; the personal knowledge of a living God by direct communion with him, as a teacher, a comforter, an inspirer, the one and only true source of faith and hope and love.

The first and second chapters of The Acts of the Apostles, indeed the whole book, may be studied for the same purpose. In this book the Holy Spirit is the principal actor. He is referred to more than seventy times. The book is

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entitled to be called, "The Acts of the Holy Spirit." When the Spirit was poured out (2:4) on these discouraged men who had lost their leader, they were at once transformed; "common men became mighty through God to the putting down of Satan's strongholds. Into the hearts of that small and feeble band had come a power which was to shake the earth; it was the re-creation of a ruined world."

Paul's letter to the Ephesians will be very helpful. Paul labored at this city in Asia for nearly three years. In this letter the purpose of God seems to be "to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth" (1:10). This unity is brought about by uniting all men to himself. Christ is the bond of spiritual union. Thirty-six times the author uses the term, "in Christ." This unity in Christ of redeemed humanity may be promoted by maintaining the unity of the faith; by putting the individual life into the life of the church; by work-

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ing for the same ends; by cultivating the graces that make for social unity; by the performance of reciprocal duties; by uniting in a common warfare against evil.

“The church is not an end in itself; it is an instrumentality, an aggressive agency by which all the alien powers in the spiritual realm that fight against the divine order are to be overcome. The Christian is a soldier. He is to put on the whole of the God-provided armor, that he may fight for the vanquishment of the power of evil and for the establishment of righteousness and truth. Armor is for the earth; robes for heaven. Here we wear a helmet, there a crown; here we wield a sword, there we wear a palm; here we fight, there we rest. The battle is not to be given up until every rebellious power is put down and the whole round world brought into harmony with the will of heaven.”

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For Cultivating the Life of Faith

4. In cultivating the life of faith, the Book of Hebrews will be especially helpful. The old Jewish dispensation is passing away, and good as it was, there is a better one at hand. This "word of exhortation" was written by some one of these Jewish believers so their faith would not give way. The revelation of God to man is fulfilled in Christ; he has appointed him heir of all things. He is superior to prophets, to angels, to Moses, to Joshua, to Aaron, to Melchizedek. The new age is better than the one that is passing; it has a better hope, a better covenant, better promises, better tabernacle, better sacrifices, a better possession, a better country, a better resurrection, a better inheritance. It is God's way always to provide something better for us. Progress in his plans calls for progress in the individual Christian. To fulfill his priestly office, Christ became man; but he is more than man. He

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offered a perfect sacrifice. We are in possession of a new covenant. This brings new privileges and imposes new duties. We care to hold fast the "confidence of faith that it wavers not." Those who follow the Master in the day of persecution will rejoice in the day of his manifestation.

With this may be associated Paul's letter to the Galatians. He planted the church in Galatia. After leaving it for work elsewhere his old enemies, the Judaistic teachers, crept in and tried to put his converts again under the bondage of legalism. They even claimed that he was a pretender, and not a real apostle. In chapters one and two, Paul defends his claims to the apostleship by showing that his message was from God; in chapters two and three he declares the spiritual independence of the believer, especially his freedom from the yoke of ceremonialism; in chapters five and six he exhorts the Galatian Christians to hold fast the liberty which they have in

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Christ; not abusing it, but using it for the highest end. He lays special emphasis on the doctrine of Christian liberty; they should maintain spiritual independence. There was danger that they might fall from grace. There could be no compromise. They must not use their liberty as license. They must obey the law of Christ, which is the law of love. They must not be weary, for they should reap if they fainted not. They should glory in the cross of Christ. Suffering for Jesus is a better sign of the Christian spirit than the most painstaking performance of outward religious acts.

For Hope of Final Triumph

5. To develop the hope of final triumph, the consciousness of victory over the daily ills of life, over our own sinful natures, as well as the assurance of the life to come, read Romans, especially the eighth chapter. All life is a conflict. The battle of the Christian is to bring lawless appetites and impulses

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under the law of Christ. He who has that conception is a coworker with God and is led by the Spirit of God. He no longer cries to God in fear; his suffering and conflict are not for punishment, but are a gift of the Father's love. He knows what the end will be if he continues on to the end. "He is no lost child. He knows whence he came—from his Father; he knows where he now is, for he is with his Father; he knows whither he is going, for he is going to his Father's house; he knows what is expected of him, for it is expected that he will be a loving, trusting son of a loving, life-giving Father; he knows who is the master of his destiny, for his past, present, and future are in his Father's hands. His Father has chosen him to be conformed to the image of Christ his Lord, and into this glorious perfection will he bring him, even him, at last." What, then, can he fear?

We may study the Book of Job for the same purpose. Job's history teaches

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us that afflictions are not in proportion to our sinfulness, nor given for purposes of punishment. If our hearts condemn, is not God greater than our hearts, and will he not condemn us? If we keep fast hold of him and say, "Though he slay me, I will trust in him," we shall triumph at last, and our false friends and enemies shall be discomfited.

The Book of Revelation will be especially cheery. It was written in part to encourage the Jews in the final triumph of Christianity. Some events had just occurred which were especially significant; the persecutions of Christians at the hands of the Roman power, beginning in the time of Nero, who, having burned the city of Rome, found it necessary to find a scapegoat on whom the responsibility for the dreadful crime could be laid; and next the Jewish war which led to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. It is thought that during the former of these events Peter and Paul perished, leaving

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John the only remaining member of the apostolic band. Josephus tells of the dreadful horrors of this war, when the holy city was "compassed about with armies." The temple was gone, the city had fallen, the faithful were being everywhere persecuted, and the holy land was ravaged as by wild beasts. The hearts of men were failing them. John with his vision saw that the church was being tried by fire, but in the end would be victorious, and so he wrote this book. It taught that "no believer had any cause for despair; much had been suffered, much more would yet be suffered, but the end was sure. The world-powers were certain to fall under the power of the Messiah. Let the church look up. Her deliverance and the transformation of the kingdoms of this world into the kingdom of God and his anointed was near. The city of God, the new social order, the reign of righteousness on this earth, was already descending from heaven. . . . The book was not written to sat-

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isfy the curiosity of men regarding the secrets of the future, but to confirm Christian faith and inspire Christian hope in that age, and in all ages.”

“ALL scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be adjusted, thoroughly fitted for all good works.”—*Paul*.

Conclusion

Conclusion

WE have not space to particularize further. Each book was written for some special purpose, and has a value for each one of us. Read each one and inquire of it what teaching therein is for you. Paul writes to Timothy (II. Timothy 2:3-16), "Every scripture inspired . . . is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." An examination of each book to find what it teaches *me*, will bring new revelations of truth and duty.

Says Rev. R. W. Torrey: "The failure to make personal application of the truth discovered in Bible study lies at the root of its fruitlessness in many instances. In our study of the Bible the question before our minds should always be, What is there here *for me*?"

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What duty is pointed out here for me to do? What line of action is suggested for me to follow? What privilege is here revealed for me to claim? What promise is here proclaimed for me to make my own? In this way our life will be steadily enlarging into the measure of that perfect life which is set forth in the Bible. Happy is the man who stands before his Bible with the determination that every command in it he will obey, every promise in it he will appropriate, and every privilege declared in it he will claim for himself, and who is constantly on the lookout for new commands to follow, new promises to lay hold of, and new privileges to make his own. But how many there are who study the Bible and seemingly get quite a clear understanding of its meaning, but upon whose minds it never seems to dawn that these immeasurable privileges are for them! If you belong to this class, learn to read your Bible in a new way,

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as the voice of 'the living God' speaking to you."

In order to make this study most helpful, one needs a good concordance, so as to be able to find kindred passages; a good reference Bible is also very helpful. There are references which do not refer, hence one needs to get the best. "Nave's Topical Bible" will prove a very valuable help. It collects together in systematic order and under familiar headings all that the Bible contains on particular subjects. In the ordinary concordance a verse is mentioned but once. In the Topical Bible some are mentioned from one to twenty times, according to the number of subjects the verse contains. It were well to have more than one Bible for different purposes. If the reader can have but one, it should be the "Standard American Edition of the Revised Version," published by Thomas Nelson & Son, New York. As to plans of study, it is not so much, after all, the fact of having *the* plan, but *a* plan of

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some kind. These may vary as to the taste of the individual. The prominent teachers of improved Bible study over the land will send an outline of their work on application. Very valuable suggestions will be furnished on application to the International Committee of Young Men's Christian Association, New York. As we write, a copy of "Daily Bible" comes to us from Clifton Springs, New York, and will be sent to any one for examination. Select *some plan*, and follow it daily with the prayerful attitude, the listening ear, the teachable mind, and the obedient will.

In conclusion we would say, in the words of another, "Let us renew our vows of love and loyalty to this precious Bible. We love it, not only because it is the old family Bible that lay on the stand in the childhood's home, not only because fingers that now are sweeping the harps of gold once turned its leaves, and eyes that now are riveted in ecstatic rapture on the Lamb 'as it

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had been slain' once read eagerly its divine promises, and voices that now are joining in the heavenly anthem, once sang with us David's psalms and Calvary's hymns. We love it not only for what it has been to our souls, for its wells of salvation, for its crimsoned cross, for its empty sepulcher, for its never-failing promises, for its assurance of death conquered and mansions prepared, but we love this Bible because it is the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation; God's hammer to break flinty hearts in pieces, God's truth to illumine darkened minds, God's peace to calm troubled souls, God's manna to nourish and sustain pilgrims, till the Jordan is reached."

We intended the above paragraph to end this little volume. And yet we cannot forbear to give, as an appendix, this "Last Message" of Dr. Joseph Parker, author of "The People's Bible," which

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remains after him as a monument to his faithful study of this blessed Book:

“There is one test to which I cannot but submit every creed, every religion, every book. What kind of manhood has it produced? What sort of men has the old Bible grown? What of their aspirations, their service, their sacrifice? They were grand men; perhaps narrow-minded, perhaps austere, perhaps conservative, but they were honorable, determined, self-sacrificing men. They were men who put themselves to a great deal of trouble for others; they gave away much money; they counted not their lives dear unto them; they liberated slaves; they smashed iniquitous monopolies; they founded missionary societies, dared fire and sword, pestilence and cruelty. They had not the latest learning on the Pentateuch, Isaiah, and the Apocryphal books, but they gripped the Bible with a nerve of steel. They had immense and miracle-working faith. I believe in my heart that they were more self-

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sacrificing than many who laugh at their ignorance and condemn their narrowness. They believed in the literal inspirations of the Bible, in the immortality of the soul, in eternal punishment, in the atoning death of the Lord Jesus, and they cried after, if finally they might attain the holiness of God. They were not critics, they were great workers; not grammarians, but generous givers; not pedants, but unsparing in benevolence and sacrifice. I judge every religion by the men it makes, and so judged, the Bible has no need to be ashamed of its stalwarts and its heroes. Shall I offend scholars and critics, grammarians and pedants, if I frankly say that merely as such they have next to nothing to do with the Bible? that the Bible has little or nothing to say to them in their academical capacity? The Bible seeks and finds the heart, talks to the spirit when in the deepest humility, goes out after the soul when in its penitence and mortal hunger. When the reader is least a

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grammarian he may be nearest the spirit of the book. 'Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, to this man will I look, to the man that is of a humble and a contrite heart, and that trembleth at my word.' To 'tremble' is better than to parse. In a deep and large sense salvation is not of grammar, else then only grammarians could have a high place in heaven.

"It is not to be wondered at that some of us still cling to the Bible after the illiterate and traditional manner of our fathers, and mothers, and pastors. Blame our training. Take full account of our antecedents. We drew in our love of the Bible with our mother's milk. The Bible helped some of us when the father died, and there was neither coal in the grate nor bread in the cupboard. It sanctified our poverty, our struggles, our desolation. It turned the grave into a garden plot. It put heart into us when all other things failed. The Bible has made us men. We are not to be told that this con-

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solatory (not critical) Bible is still left to us. How long will it be left? Still higher critics may possibly arise in distant years who will purloin this jewel also. Who can say how much of the Bible will be left in half a century? We have a right to be suspicious. Where much has gone, more may go. On the whole, therefore, I am of opinion that it is better to hold the Bible very much as we have always held it, to keep an open mind in relation to all competent and reverent criticism, to cling to the Bible in all its proved consolations and particular results, and to leave many difficulties and perplexities to be settled when, in heaven, we have more time and more light."—*The Life of Faith*.

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